

Message Text

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, EAID, BG, IN, UR, US

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL ZIA

1. SUMMARY. AT DINNER AT STATE GUEST HOUSE LAST NIGHT FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION OF DONOR COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, GENERAL ZIA ASKED ME TO JOIN HIM FOR A PRIVATE CONVERSATION, THE MAIN PURPOSE OF WHICH WAS EVIDENTLY TO RENEW HIS REQUEST FOR MORE AMERICAN AID TO BANGLADESH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. HE ALSO 1) ASSURED ME THAT THE SECURITY PROBLEM WHICH HAD ARISEN IN CHITTAGONG OVER THE WEEKEND WAS NOW UNDER FULL CONTROL; 2) TOLD ME THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO SERIOUS BORDER INCIDENTS WITH INDIA FOR AT LEAST LAST THREE WEEKS; 3) CONGRATULATED US ON OUR POLICY OF RESTRAINT IN ANGOLA WHICH HE SAID WOULD EVENTUALLY SUCCEED; AND 4) SHOWED A MARKED DISINCLINATION TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF THE ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 1977. END SUMMARY.

2. SITUATION IN CHITTAGONG. WHEN I INQUIRED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN CHITTAGONG AND WHAT HAD CAUSED THE PROBLEMS THERE, ZIA SAID THAT THE PROBLEM HAD BEEN CAUSED BY THE "DIRTY TRICKS OF OUTSIDE ELEMENTS" WHICH HAD NOT SUCCEEDED. HE SAID THE SITUATION WAS NOW FULLY UNDER CONTROL. WHEN

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I ASKED AGAIN ABOUT THE SPECIFIC CAUSE AND NATURE OF THE

DIFFICULTIES THERE, HE TURNED THE QUESTION ASIDE BY REPEATING THAT EVERYTHING WAS ALL RIGHT NOW AND THAT I MUST HAVE MY OWN SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE MATTER. (LATER IN OUR CONVERSATION, ZIA USED HIS CHITTAGONG VISIT TO ILLUSTRATE THE POINT THAT THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH WERE BEHIND HIS REGIME DESPITE INDIAN PRESSURES. HE SAID THAT AT ONE POINT DURING THE VISIT HIS AIDES, ON SEEING A LARGE CROWD THROUGH WHICH HE WOULD HAVE TO PROCEED, HAD GOTTEN JUMPY AND HAD URGED HIM TO GET BACK IN HIS CAR. HE SAID HE TOLD THEM, "BUT I CAN'T DO THAT -- CHITTAGONG IS MY HOME BASE." HE SAID HE HAD THEN WALKED FOR SOME DISTANCE THROUGH THE CROWD AND HE HAD SENSED THAT THE PEOPLE WERE VERY FRIENDLY TO HIM.)

3. BORDER PROBLEMS WITH INDIA. ZIA SAID THAT THERE WAS NOW A REDUCED LEVEL OF ACTIVITY ALONG THE BORDER AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO SERIOUS INCIDENT FOR AT LEAST THREE WEEKS. HE AMENDED THIS, HOWEVER, TO NOTE THAT THERE HAD BEEN A RAID THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY IN WHICH HE SAID THE MISCREANTS HAD SUFFERED SOME CASUALTIES. HE SAID THE INDIAN NEGOTIATOR AT THE RECENT BORDER TALKS HERE HAD GUARANTEED HIM THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER INCIDENTS; ZIA ADDED THAT HE HAD FOUND IT INTERESTING THAT THE INDIAN HAD BEEN ABLE TO MAKE THAT GUARANTEE. HE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE INDIANS HAD WANTED TO "MAKE AN IMPRESSION" BY THE ATTACKS IN JANUARY BUT THAT THEY HAD FAILED IN THEIR OBJECTIVE. THE BANGLADESH PEOPLE HAD SHOWN THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND THAT THEY COULD NOT ACCEPT THE INDIAN ACTIVITIES. HE SAID THAT IN FACT THE INDIANS WERE BEGINNING TO HAVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS WITH THE MISCREANTS AND WERE NOW KEEPING THEM PRETTY WELL CONFINED TO THEIR CAMPS.

4. FIRYUBIN'S VISIT TO DELHI. OUR CONVERSATION ABOUT INDIAN BORDER ACTIVITY LED HIM TO CALL MY ATTENTION TO THE CONNECTION HE BELIEVED EXISTED BETWEEN INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER SAMAR SEN'S CONSULTATION IN NEW DELHI AND THE COINCIDENTALLY TIMED VISIT THERE OF SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN. HE SAID HE HAD ASKED THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSIONER IN DELHI TO TRY TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE FIRYUBIN VISIT AND THE LINK WITH SAMAR SEN'S CONSULTATION.

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5. ANGOLA. ZIA CONGRATULATED ME ON OUR POLICY OF RESTRAINT IN ANGOLA, A POLICY WHICH HE SAID WOULD REPAY US IN THE END. I SAID I HOPED HE WAS RIGHT BUT WE WERE LEFT WITH THE PROBLEM WHETHER THE SOVIET UNION SHOULD HAVE FREEDOM OF ACTION TO GO IN TO AREAS, AS IT HAD IN ANGOLA WITH CUBAN FORCES AND LARGE AMOUNTS OF MATERIEL, WHERE THE SOVIET UNION HAD NO HISTORICAL OR TRADITIONAL INTEREST. ZIA SAID THAT

SOVIETS WERE SURE TO FAIL IN ANGOLA AND THAT WE SHOULD BE PATIENT; "ANGOLA IS NOT EASTERN EUROPE", HE SAID.

6. AMERICAN AID TO BANGLADESH. RECALLING THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH ME IN JANUARY (DACCA 0325) HIS SUGGESTION THAT WE HELP THEM BUILD RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN THEIR UNIVERSITIES TO OFFER THE STUDENTS USEFUL CHANNELS FOR THEIR ENERGIES WHEN NOT IN SCHOOL, ZIA SAID THAT THEY WERE PROCEEDING THEMSELVES TO BUILD THESE COMPLEXES AND THAT, WHILE OUR HELP IN THIS AREA WOULD STILL BE WELCOME, HE WANTED NOW TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF HIS REQUEST IN VIEW OF THE DIFFICULTIES I HAD EXPLAINED TO HIM ABOUT CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES. WHAT THEY ALSO NEEDED, HE SAID, AND WHAT HE HOPED WE COULD PROVIDE, WAS LABORATORY FACILITIES AT SOME OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS-- FACILITIES SUCH AS PHYSICS LABS, CHEMISTRY LABS, AND WORK-SHOPS FOR MANUAL TRAINING. AFTER BRIEFLY REFERRING ONCE AGAIN TO OUR DEWIBERATE POLICY OF FOCUSING OUR AID IN AGRICULTURE AND FAMILY PLANNING, I TOLD HIM THAT NEVERTHELESS I WOULD LOOK INTO THIS IDEA AND SEE WHETHER ANYTHING WERE POSSIBLE. I ASKED HIM IF HE HAD TALKED TO OTHER DONORS ABOUT SUCH AID; HE THOUGHT PERHAPS SOME OF HIS PEOPLE HAD BUT HE WAS NOT SURE.

7. BANGLADESH ELECTIONS. I TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO DRAW OUT ZIA ON THE QUESTION OF THE PROJECTED ELECTIONS IN FEBRUARY 1977 BUT, AS WITH THE EARLIER QUESTION OF THE DISTURBANCES IN CHITTAGONG, HE OBVIOUSLY DID NOT WANT TO GO INTO DETAIL. WHEN I ASKED, FOR EXAMPLE, HOW THE CONSULTATIONS WERE GOING BETWEEN THE REGIME AND OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS ON THE QUESTION OF WHEN POLITICAL ACTIVITY MIGHT BE RESUMED, HE SIMPLY SMILED. I COULD NOT HELP INFERRING FROM HIS REACTION THAT HE IS NOT SURE THAT HE

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WISHES TO HAVE ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE BUT THAT HE IS RELUCTANT TO SAY SO. (EMBASSY IS PREPARING ANALYSIS OF ELECTION PROSPECTS WHICH WILL BE SUBMITTED IN NEAR FUTURE.)

8. COMMENT. A MINOR BUT INTERESTING ASPECT OF THIS CONVERSATION WAS THE ALMOST UNCONSCIOUS WAY IN WHICH GENERAL ZIA APPEARED TO IDENTIFY HIMSELF WITH THE WEST AND AGAINST THE SOVIETS. NORMALLY GUARDED AND CIRCUMSPECT, HE MADE NO BONES ABOUT WHERE HIS SYMPATHIES LIE IN THE CONFRONTATION IN ANGOLA. IF HE GOES A LITTLE FAR IN LINKING SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN'S VISIT TO DELHI WITH THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER'S CONSULTATION THERE, HE IS AT LEAST FAITHFUL TO THE BANGALEE HABIT OF SEEING THEIR COUNTRY AS THE OBJECT OF FOREIGN CONSPIRACIES. ZIA WAS AS FRIENDLY AS EVER AND MORE RELAXED THAN USUAL; WHATEVER HIS PROBLEMS WERE

IN CHITTAGONG, THEY DO NOT SEEM TO WEIGH TOO HEAVILY ON HIM
NOW.
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